

# Virginia's Early Intervention Project

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## •Early Intervention (EI)

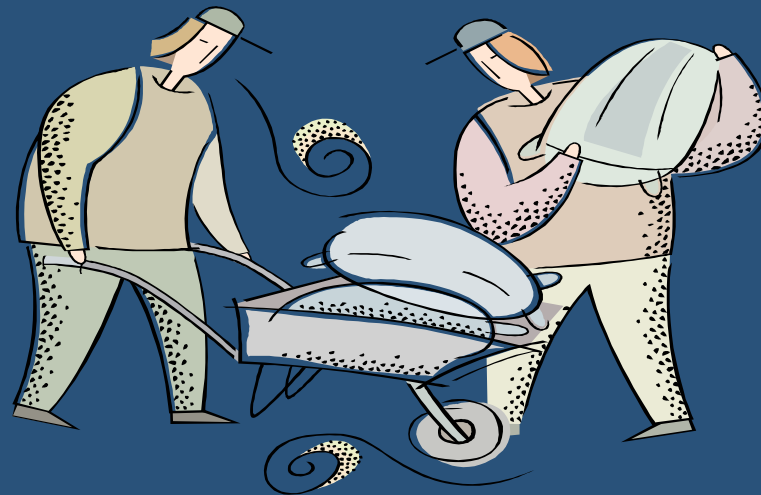
- Overall objective: To positively impact the relationship between the non-custodial parent and our agency in a way that will improve the compliance rate and result in higher collections for the families we serve.



# Positive impact of early intervention



- Creating a stronger foundation. The combination of elements such as early intervention and strong enforcement tools make our program stronger.





# Goals

- To improve the communication.
- To change negative perceptions.
- To identify and address barriers.
- To provide intense contact and monitoring in the early stages of the case.



# Improving communication.

- Providing a direct line of communication. The EI worker's direct line is provided immediately and repeatedly.
- To consistently work to stay in touch with the non-custodial parent and help him/her develop a habit of communication and compliance.
- Carefully explaining how current support and debt amounts were calculated.
- Providing opportunity for discussion about any debt prior to enforcement action.



- To ensure non-custodial parents are fully aware of all consequences of non-compliance before any enforcement action is necessary.



## Changing negative perceptions

- Communicate with the ncp the value we place on his/her cooperation in this process.
- Clarify the role of our agency is not that of an advocate for the custodial parent or non-custodial parent.
- Emphasize the positive impact regular child support can have on children and children's futures.
- Consistently stress the positives of working with our agency and our desire to help them succeed.



# Barriers

- Important – how to help ncps with barriers they face such as unemployment, past incarceration or limited education?
- To stress the importance of communicating with DCSE about their different situations.
- To develop informational resources for the ncps to assist them with barriers.





## Next step/ What cases are referred?

- Newly obligated cases with Virginia court orders or Virginia administrative orders.
- New cases from custodial parents with pre-existing Virginia support orders.
- Non-custodial parents referred to this caseload if they have never been a participant in a case with Virginia DCSE with any custodial parent. We wanted to remove any pre-conceived opinions by the ncp or our agency. Clean slates!



## Developing the project without additional resources.

- How could we make it work without additional staff? It “took the village” so to speak to get this done.
- The entire staff has supported this idea and many are involved in the details.





- Next, who would be the worker assigned to this caseload?
- Professional, personable and enthusiastic.
- Firm, but approachable.
- Most important quality – enthusiasm!
- We chose someone with all these qualities who has done a wonderful job – Maureen Evans – our star!



## How does the EI caseload work?

- Cases meeting criteria flow thru caseload for 120 days.
- Continuous cycling of cases allows for smaller caseload.
- Small caseload allows time for intense follow up and personal contact as well as thorough review of case.



# Early Intervention Caseload Parameters



- Cases remain in the Early Intervention Caseload a maximum of 120 days **unless** the EI worker determines earlier that the ncp is not a good candidate for the program.
- Early identification of this behavior results in immediate referral for court action; no time wasted; less chance of “falling thru the cracks”.

# Specifics

- Person to person meetings if at all possible; if not possible then case is discussed via telephone.
- Initially, the establishment workers and the intake staff are sending out a notice of the “ncp’s selection to participate in this special caseload” .
- Direct line for caseworker is provided with initial notice.



# Specifics:

Once the case is referred to the EI worker and the case is reviewed, a package of information that includes:

- Detailed information re: current support amount and arrearage
- All possible ways to make payments
- Material specifying expectations and consequences
- Frequently asked questions from OCSE website
- Payment coupons and pre-addressed envelopes
- All possible ways to contact our agency
- Resource material to help with possible barriers
- In the event phone messages are left for the ncp and there is no response, the package is sent by certified mail.



# Proactive/ not reactive

- Always seeking a verbal commitment from the ncp that a payment will be made and when.
- Consistent and timely follow up is the key ingredient.
- Calling to remind the ncp before the anticipated date.
- Consistent clarification that the non-custodial parent is responsible for payments until he/she sees they have been withheld from wages.
- Reviewing for anticipated payments and calling the ncp/or employer immediately if the payment has not been received.





# Follow up/ Follow up!

- The EI worker uses triggers/worklists to routinely follow up re: payments, reporting employment etc. The timeframes for follow up are shorter than the normal. Personal follow up is the preferred method.
- Including telephone call reminders/ mail reminders/ calls to employers.



## Intense review, contact and follow up.

- Focus changes to consistent reminders and follow up.
- A telephone becomes the primary tool of the specialist assigned the Early Intervention Caseload.



## Focus on positive interaction.

- Keep the non-custodial parent informed.
- Focus to express our appreciation for any contact initiated by a non-custodial parent to provide information.
- This includes routine expressions of thanks including notes, phone calls and the occasional use of thank you cards.



# How cases are handled at the end of the 120 day Early Intervention cycle?



Transfer letters to the non-custodial parents have been developed based on the status at the end of the 120 day cycle. Three types of letters:

- Paying ncps
- Partially paying ncps
- Non-paying ncps
- **Note: Self employed or non-employed ncps receive the direct line for the new worker. All letters include the new worker's name.**

## Better now than later

- Non-paying ncps: The EI worker prepares the case for court action and notifies the new worker. This prevents the case from “falling through the cracks” and also prevents high arrearages from accruing before the case ever gets to court.
- Our courts are happy with this aspect of the project; they don’t understand the delays that occur in some cases before court actions are filed.



# Early Results Look Good!

- Results for cases with cycle ending 5/31/07 the best since project began: 87% of ncps made payment/ 81% made payment on arrears/77% of current support paid.
- % of all EI cases with some type of payment during project: 83%
- % of all current support paid since project began: 69%
- Higher than the statewide average.
- % of all arrears cases with a payment: 74%
- Higher than the statewide average.

